

Household hazardous waste: What’s hiding under your sink?

BY MATT NIDA
Environmental Management

In an effort to raise awareness, Kirtland AFB wants to reiterate to all base residents that household hazardous waste should be disposed of properly.

Household hazardous wastes that are tossed in the trash, poured down the drain or in a ditch can contribute to the contamination of groundwater and surface water.

Most chemicals used commercially in large quantities are regulated by federal law, but there are no laws to regulate the small quantities used by households. For this reason, everyone needs to do their part to minimize the environmental impact of use and disposal. Examine your cleanup and disposal practices.

Even old habits that seem harmless have potential risks.

A few examples of common household hazardous wastes:

- ★ Aerosols
- ★ Oven Cleaner
- ★ Adhesives
- ★ Insecticides
- ★ Antifreeze
- ★ Pesticides
- ★ Bleach

- ★ Rodent Poison
- ★ Cleaning Fluids
- ★ Solvents
- ★ Herbicides
- ★ Batteries
- ★ Paints
- ★ Metal Polish

It is usually not difficult to determine the hazards of specific products. Product labels contain useful information on ingredients, hazards, and proper use. Pesticide labels are legally required to provide information on active ingredients and toxicity. Further information can be obtained by contacting the manufacturer of a product and requesting a Material Safety Data Sheet.

You may have household hazardous waste in your home. Items that are labeled flammable, corrosive, reactive or toxic are considered household hazardous wastes and are commonly found in your garage, basement, under sinks and in your bathrooms.

Your household can respond to



household waste concerns by:

- ★ reducing the amount of trash you throw away
- ★ reusing products and containers
- ★ recycling as much waste as you can

We all have an obligation to help provide for a better world and these are just a few of the things we can do to help in this effort.

Recycle

Many things can be recycled. The most commonly recycled household items are aluminum, newspaper and plastic. Different products have different recycled lives because some materials recycle better than others. There is a recycling center in the east parking lot of the Commissary for these items.

Where do I go?

The Self-Help facility in Building 20683 will accept most household hazardous materials and wastes with no fee. Jim Gettings, who is the manager of Initial Accumulation and the head of operations at the Self-Help Facility, can be reached at 846-0926.

Rinchem Environmental Company accepts household hazardous waste from residents of Bernalillo County (including Kirtland AFB) every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at 6133 Edith Boulevard. They can be contacted at 998-6623.

All recycling can be coordinated through Steve Kitt, Kirtland AFB’s hazardous waste and hazardous materials program manager. He can be reached at 846-9014.

Commissary closes for computer upgrade

The Commissary closes March 10 during upgrades of the checkout system. The Kirtland AFB store is one of the first stores within the Defense Commissary Agency to receive the upgrade.

The upgrade in selected hardware and software that extends the use of current point

of sale systems for six years benefits customers and employees.

Customers can take advantage of features including one that automatically switches to an alternate processing center when a primary processing center is unable to transmit credit and debit card transac-

tions. Additional security protection is an enhancement, along with coupon processing.

Through the upgrade, the Commissary will be able to pursue use of a self-checkout lane in the future.

The upgrade closure is expected to last one day only.

Chairman’s job: protecting Guard, Reserve employment rights

BY JENNIFER E. WEST

377th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

Norman L. Churchill wants employers and their Reservist and National Guard employees to know that fulfilling patriotic duty in military service can’t hurt their civilian jobs.

As the state chairman of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, called “ESGR,” Churchill and other state committee members promote awareness of the 1994 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. They work with companies and employees experiencing potential or actual problems because of military obligations.

“We’ve learned most employers at the top and throughout the organizations are patriotic and want to do the right thing,” Churchill said. But, some employers simply do not know or understand the federal law protecting the employment rights of individuals called to serve their country. That’s when ESGR can step in to help inform company human resources staff, supervisors and others involved.

“We’re an awareness organization,” Churchill explained. “We are proactive in that we have several different activities that support the effort to make employers and Guard and Reserve aware of the federal law that gives the Guard or Reserve member their jobs back once they return, and that’s the key.”

“(ESGR members) are trained in Washington on the law and how to administer the law,” he explained. “So, when you call an ombudsman in our committee, you are talking to someone who has received formal training in the law and how to deal with it to help these young Guard and Reservists.”

Through briefings to Guard and Reserve units and activities aimed at employers, the message is being promoted successfully. Before organizational policy change, Churchill explained, the ESGR message was spread through briefings to the military members.

“The Pentagon and ESGR changed the policy in November, and it’s now the responsibility of the unit—the command structure. We’re changing our emphasis from briefing the unit member toward public outreach to employers, because we’ve found over the last couple of years that the employers are ignorant of the federal law that requires them to reinstate their employees. (The change) is a good revision of priorities.”

That change, however, has resulted in an increased workload for the 110 New Mexico com-



Photo by Todd Berenger

Norman L. Churchill, state chairman of Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve, holds a proclamation of support for Guard and Reserve signed by President George W. Bush.

mittee members, who are still asked by units to conduct briefings along with connecting with many employers.

With deployments increasing, more calls from employers and military members can be expected. Committee members who previously received about six calls monthly from Guard or Reserve members now hear from several each day. The good news is that now many of the calls are from Guardsmen or Reservists asking how to recognize their employers.

“You see people reaching out. They feel patriotic for their Guard and Reserve employees and Guard and Reserve employees know what a bind they put their employer in. Now, (the Guard and Reserve employees) want to show some appreciation for their bosses,” Churchill said.

The organization’s methods of educating the private sector focuses on reaching employers through awards, briefings and special annual Bosslift tours to locations where Guardsmen and Reservists can be observed performing their duties.

Although an employer might initially express mild interest in an employee’s military duty be-

fore taking the organization’s tour, Churchill said that mild interest becomes excitement and enthusiasm during the Bosslift tours. The tours are a great tool for building rapport and better understanding of the law and their military employees’ obligations for companies that are hesitantly complying with the federal act.

Also bringing companies into the loop are the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom and Pro Patria awards. Reservists and Guardsmen can request that their companies or supervisors be nominated for the Freedom Award recognizing support beyond compliance with the law. The New Mexico Automotive Dealers Association is nominated for the upcoming award in recognition of its Operation Home Front, a fund established to provide differential pay for lowers ranks of the Guard and Reserve from New Mexico who are serving active duty. Recent local recipients are Intel Corp in Rio Rancho and Southwest Airlines in Albuquerque.

While employed by Travelers Insurance and serving as a Reservist, Churchill was invited to join ESGR as an ombudsman by Dean Irwin. Irwin was a Sandia National Laboratories employee who formed the New Mexico organization in 1978. Bringing his experience as a former military inspector general and personnel officer, Churchill has served about three and a half years of his six-year term.

Reserve and Guard unable to resolve problems at their unit level may contact Churchill at 296-2556. Visit the ESGR site at www.esgr.org or call ESGR’s Ombudsmen Services National Headquarters, 800-336-4590.